



# HER STORY CAMPAIGN



## In Memory of Her - story of Nduna Mkomani and the African Liberation Movement of Majimaji War 1905 - 1907



## 1. In Memory of Her-story of Nduna Mkomanile and the African Liberation Movement of Maji Maji War 1905-1907

The history of African liberation and Tanzania's journey for independence is incomplete without a trace from Maji Maji War of resistance. In the same vein, the spirit of African women and Tanzania's women to embark in the scene of Liberation and social transformation is inseparable from the legacy of Mkomanile. It is from such embryonic stages where the current thrust of many courageous can be traced and able women leaders emerged to combat and defend the human rights and women rights from the inherent patriarchal systems.

Regarding the current movements of the struggle to combating patriarchal systems, and reclaiming the right and dignity of women in Tanzania traced back in the mid of 19th century. It emerged during the first phase of colonial encounter. It is at this time when African societies experienced a new social set up that was discriminative in nature. It is the system which isolated African women from access of education. It also barricaded African women from direct involvement in the productive activities for their economic gains. It is similarly the system that excluded women

from climbing to the community's leadership posts; the setup not only excluded but also distanced women from all forums of decision makings.

Among other social-cultural injustice, which the historical accounts record is that, which made reasons why the first African women in Tanzania pushed to resist this system. The first African women to appear and confront the colonial and patriarchal systems were Chief Mwamkyuma (1890-190) from Muheza- Tanga, Chief Liti from Singida (1900), Nduna (sub-chief) Mkomanile from Kitanda, Songea (1897-1906) and Nantabila Uponda of Nandete Kilwa (1904-1905), just to mention a few.

At different times and in various forms, these women resisted against all social injustice exercised by the colonial regime. This resisted form was the system of administration framed to make sure that women are constantly humiliated, exploited and not only in a permanently forced state of disadvantaged and belonging to, but also occupying the lowest and inferior class in the society.

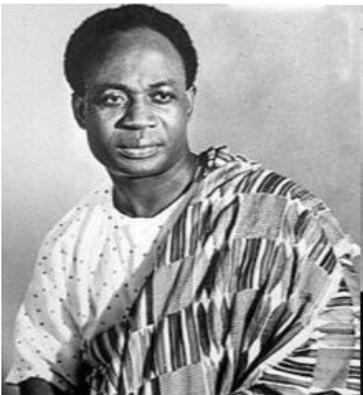
The sustainability of the system ensured was firmly



entrenched directly from the colonial education systems. This dispensation of the education system from the beginning discriminated girls on one hand. On the other hand, it privileged boys by preparing them to become future leaders and servants in the colonial governments.

The inherited colonial administration and education systems, both prepared African women to merely become wives and domestic servants. Colonial officials constrained female advancement by limiting access to education and wage employment. In this configuration therefore, forcefully women formed the subordinate social class in the society by occupying unskilled labour wages. Indeed, the framework generally emphasized on domestic skills and knowledge that prepared women for being "better wives and mothers. Few women became qualified for wage labor and even fewer for professional positions. Employed women usually performed low paying, unskilled jobs connected to the domestic area. As these regulations took force, the

status and potential prosperity of men and women increasingly diverged. Consequently, such systemic conception therefore, not only created gender inequalities but also continue perpetuating and sustaining the pervasive gender exploitation and unreasonable social subjugation and discrimination of women in Tanzania to the extent of enslavement. It is this social system that denies the visibility of women personalities to express practices and present their genius capacities, their leadership capabilities, and their economy management skills. This is the reason why there is the her-story initiatives to recognize the contribution of women in the struggle of emancipation, as the role of women to provide leadership and their economic contribution in the national development is not much renowned and popularized. Their her-stories have been sidelined if not silenced, even if it coexists in a similar domain with that of men, theirs is presented in a muted forms.



Kwame Nkrumah



Patrice Lumumba



Wangari Maathai



Robert Mugabe



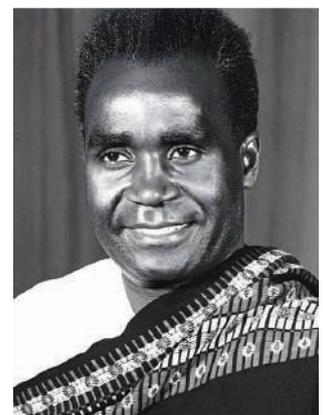
Samora Machel



Jomo Kenyatta



Nelson Mandela



Keneth Kaunda

## 2. Mwalimu Nyerere's reaction to Her-story Campaign against Patriarchal System:

The current historical account not only document but also paints Mwalimu Julius Kambarage as the first Tanzanian Nationalist Leader to appear and stand tall as the real feminist. He appears aggressively and spiritually against all forms and sorts of violence against women rights. For instance, his feminist ideology is explicit apparent through his work published in 1944, "Uhuru wa Mwanamke" (the Freedom of Women). In this blueprint, Mwalimu Nyerere eloquently expresses his deep heart felt concern about the women rights. Among other things, in his personal reflection and analysis of the social-cultural matrices surrounding African women, he comes to the general conclusion that:

"Wanawake wetu ni watumwa,...Utumwa bado hauja-ondoka, ...nimeyaandika na kuyasema haya ili kuone-sha jinsi hali ya wanawake wengi wa makabila mengi katika nchi hizi walivyo bado katika hali ya utumwa...na sina shaka na jambo hili na si jambo rahisi kulitam-ka...lakini ugumu wake hauwezi kunizuia kusema na kudai jambo ninaloliamini mno..UHURU WA MWANA-MKE" . (Julius K. Nyerere, 1944:4). In its loose transla-tion, it reads as:

"...African women in most of our societies are slaves. I am aware how hard it is to publicly pronounce this reality, however, such hardship won't stop and destructing me from my firm believes and demands for FREEDOM OF WOMEN)..." (Julius K. Nyerere, 1944:4).

For sure, from here, there is no doubt that the social inequality confronted with today, irritated Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere to the extent that he believed such a state of women in our societies as enslavement. The Tanzania's current generation consid-ers that statement of Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyer-ere therefore, as a wakeup call to stand and join the collective efforts to combat the continuing both psychological and physical enslavement of African and Tanzanian women in particular.

Despite the fact that Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyer-ere was born and raised up in the context that inherited the colonial entrenched patriarchal systems he remained real and humanistic and sympathetic to women rights. To practically redress such dehumaniz-ing system, again, in 1955 through his visionary leader-ship, as the President of the emancipatory Political .



Party, TANU, in collaboration with her abled ladies such Bibi Titi Mohammed, Tatu Mzee and others, established a special Women Wing of the party in TANU. The Wing which was specifically responsible for organizing and coordinating women's efforts and strategic techniques required for the emancipation struggles against colonialism in Tanzania. Regardless of being marginalized and denied their right to access education and leadership posts, Mwalimu believed in the talent and genius capacities of women in the struggle for social transformation and national building. It is not surprising to find in his cabinet with these few women who were available occupying ministerial and other administrative dockets. Such women who were entrusted by Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere at various posts include but not limited to: Bibi Titi Mohamed, Mwami Tereza Joseph Ntare, Lucy Lameck, Julie Maning, Anna Abdallah, Getrude Mongella, Anna Semamaba Makinda, just to mention a few. All of them were iconic nationalists and female leaders to be entrusted by, and worked together with Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere in the struggle for national development and social transformation.

### 3. The denied Access of Her-story in Tanzania:

Regardless of the initiatives and the foundation laid of recognizing, honoring and popularizing women's capacities and their roles in the struggle for national development and social transformation by Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, still Tanzania have moved not so far from the state of patriarchal system left by colonialists.

For instance, in a massive numbers, at the start of colonialism in 19th century women showed up, resisted and participated in the struggle against colonialism. Such earliest women to resist the colonial regime include Nduna (sub-chief) Mkomanile of Kitanda-Songea, Chief Liti of Singida, Chief Mwakyuma of Muheza Tanga and the courageous woman Nantabila Uponda of Kilwa-Nadete; these are recorded as first female to pave the way of and set the stage for the struggles against women and social injustices.

During the nationalist era and the after independence, the account records Mwami Tereza Joseph Ntare II, Bibi Titi Mohammed, Lucy Lameck, Anna Abdallah, Sophia Kawawa, Julie Maning, Getrude Mongella, Anna Makinda, just to mention a few, were directly involved in the process of national building and nationalization projects. Their her-story, however, have been silenced and not fully popularized, their her-historical contribution in the struggle for social liberation and their involvement in various national building projects is not fully known and accessible by the general public.

Paradoxically, since Tanzania gained her political independence in 1961 to date there are no any female museum or information centers specifically dedicated to document and

popularize their her-stories. Instead, there are three male nationally recognized museums and information centres that preserve the contributions of such nationalist leaders and their straggles against colonialism and the role of national buildings. Such Museums and information centres include the Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere National Memorial Museum in Butiama, (1999), the Rashid Mfaume Kawawa National Memorial Museum in Songea (2017) and Mtwā Mkwawa Memorial Museum at Kalenga Iringa, (1958). In this light therefore, there are no any initiative to transcend the legacy of Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere of empowering women and making sure that their her-stories is known, open to and accessed by the general public. There has been no aggressive campaign to establish credible and reliable platform at which the general public can access, learn and appreciate the role and contribution of women in the national building and social transformation in Tanzania. Consequently, as the country, what are witnessed are reasonable historical museums and information centres that preserve only male history in the themes of national building and social transformation in Tanzania. It is from this patriarchal socio-configuration where creating vacuum of leaving behind the female who worked along with Mkwawa, Mwalimu Nyerere and Kawawa in the same scenes of national building and social transformation project is seen..



Mwami Tereza Ntare ii

Mwami Tereza Ntare II, Chief of Buha the first female elected as President of African chiefs Association of Tanganyika in 1958. She remains as an icon in the transition of liberation for women in the context of culture and leadership.



Liti Kidanka

Chief Liti Kidanka, a brave woman who led the Nyaturu ethnic group in the struggle against German colonial rule, is a woman with a significant role in the revolution of the leadership attitude towards women.



Bibi Titi Mohamed

Bibi Titi Mohammed was a Tanzanian politician and activist. She was born in June 1926 in Dar es Salaam, at the time the capital of former Tanganyika. She first was considered a freedom fighter and supported the first president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere. Bibi Titi Mohammed was a member of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) the party that fought for the independence of Tanzania, and held various ministerial positions. In October 1969, she was sentenced to treason and after two years in prison, received a presidential pardon



Lucy Lameck

Lucy Lameck was a Tanzanian politician, who was the first woman to hold a Ministerial post in the government. Born to a farming family, she trained as a nurse before becoming involved in politics and attending Ruskin College, Oxford, through a scholarship. She first entered the Tanganyika National Assembly in 1960, before being elected to the Tanzania National Assembly in 1965. With the exception of 1975 to 1980, she continued to hold a seat there until her death in 1993.



Sophia Kawawa

Sophia Kawawa, the first activist to advocate women's rights and workers'. She was the founder of the Women's Union (UWT) and the chairperson. She participated in the Independence movement of Tanganyika.



Julie Catherine Manning

Julie Maning, the first woman in Tanganyika to study law in 1961, was one of 14 students enrolled at the University of Dar es Salaam and graduated in 1963. She was also the first woman appointed as a Judicial Judge (1973) and Minister of Justice from 1975 to 1983. She opened the door to the liberation of women in the field of education and court services in



Anna Abdallah

Anna Margareth Abdallah is a Tanzanian politician She was a member of the National Legislative Assembly from 1987 to 1996. Anna has been the chairman of the National Movement People's Democratic Front Party since 2005, since she took over the reins as party leader, she has promoted women's rights, advocated for change in the gender-biased criminal justice system, supported education in indigenous languages, and campaigned for ethnic minority rights. She is the author of ten books, including Shettawa I kwannage ni kwijut, Hauta kwa! – Shettawa and Joy! Women Empowerment in Tanzania and much more.to 1994



Getrude Mongella

Gertrude Ibengwe Mongella is a Tanzanian politician who was the first president of the Pan-African Parliament and was president of the African Union Commission from 2003 to 2008.to 1994



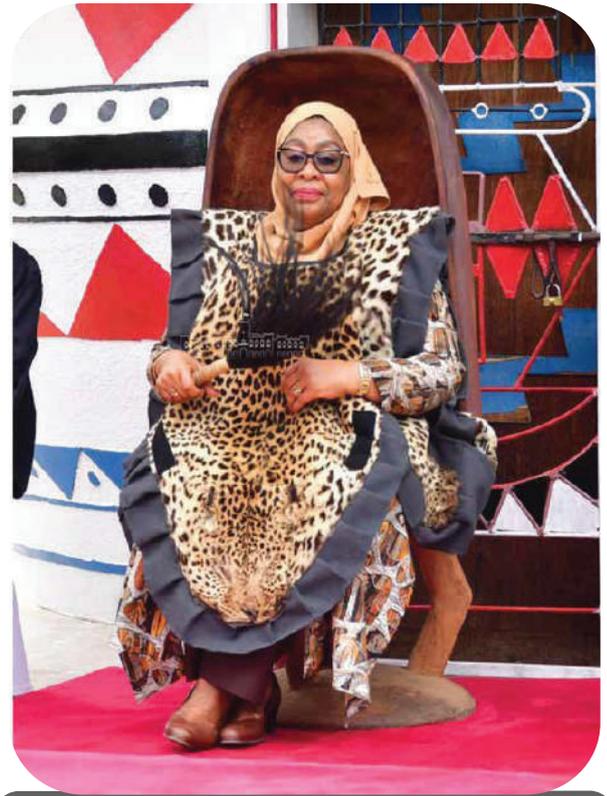
**Anna Semamba Makinda**

Anna Makinda, the first woman to hold position of Speaker of the Tanzanian Parliament in 2010. She had shown interest in politics since primary school. She holds various positions in the Government including Deputy Speaker, Minister of Member of Parliament, Regional Commissioner, and member of various Boards in Tanzania.



**Dr. Tulia Ackson  
Former Speaker National Assembly**

Tulia Ackson is the Speaker of the National Assembly of Tanzania, in office since 2022. She was appointed as a Member of Parliament by President John Magufuli. On the 27th October 2023, she was elected the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) through the meeting convened at Luanda Angola where she passed other contestants by a great margin.



**Hon. Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan  
President of United Republic of Tanzania**

Samia Suluhu Hassan is a Tanzanian politician who has been serving as president of Tanzania since 19 March 2021. She is the first woman to serve in the position. She previously served as vice-president of Tanzania from 2015 to 2021, from which she ascended to the presidency following the death of her predecessor, John Magufuli.

A native of Zanzibar, Suluhu served as a minister in the semi-autonomous region from 2000 to 2010. She then served as the Member of Parliament for the Makunduchi constituency from 2010 to 2015 and was the Minister of State in the Vice-President's Office for Union Affairs from 2010 to 2015. In 2014, she was elected as the vice-chairperson of the Constituent Assembly tasked with the drafting of the country's new constitution. Suluhu became Tanzania's first female vice-president following the 2015 general election, after being elected on the Chama Cha Mapinduzi ticket with Magufuli. Suluhu and Magufuli were re-elected to a second term in 2020.

As president, Suluhu has implemented democratic reforms, reversing the policies of her predecessor that were implemented to repress political opposition. She also implemented policies to limit the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Tanzania, which Magufuli had denied was a serious issue. Other focuses of her presidency have included the expansion of infrastructure and the globalisation of the Tanzanian economy through investors and tourism.



## 4. National Museum of Tanzania and the Her-story of Mkomanile

As expressed above, it can be noted that, despite the extensive role on African and Tanzanian women's contributions to anticolonial resistance, their direct engagement and involvement in the struggle against colonialism and post-colonial national building projects and social transformation, they remain mostly absent from the mainstream of historical and political analyses of past and current national political and socio-cultural landscapes. To redress this social cultural inequality and patriarchal conception of national building and social transformation, a feministic strategic intervention is inescapable phenomenon. To achieve this strategic measure, the National Museum of Tanzania in collaboration with Her-story coalition under the auspicious funding from the Women Fund Trust Tanzania jointly designed a strategic campaign with the project that will concentrate on researching, documenting, preserving and popularizing the Her-story of iconic women in Tanzania: starting from pre-colonial Africa, during colonial and the first colonial resistance, covering the period of nationalistic era and the struggle for independence to post independence.

The 2026 year campaign is designed to document the her-story and contribution of iconic women outstanding history of Nduna Mkomanile of Kitanda Songea who played a notable active resistance in the Maji Maji War of Resistance against colonial domination in her area of jurisdiction hence led to cost her life by being executed by the German in 1906.

## 5. Nduna Mkomanile and the Maji Maji War of Resistance

The Maji Maji War of 1905–1907 was the largest organized resistance against German colonial rule in Tanganyika, arising from forced cotton cultivation, oppressive taxation, and brutal punishment that disrupted communities in Matumbi, Ngindo, and Ngoniland. Within this landscape of struggle, Nduna Mkomanile of Kitanda–Songea emerged as a courageous leader who mobilized fighters, guided strategy and sustained the spiritual strength of the resistance. Although history has largely celebrated male commanders, community memory and recent scholarship testify that women like Mkomanile were decisive architects of the resistance. Yet their contributions remain marginal in existing museum narratives, leaving a critical gap in Tanzania's national narratives.

The National Museum of Tanzania, in collaboration with the Women Fund Tanzania and Her-story coalition, has therefore designed and dedicated this year 2026 to commemorate her iconic role in the war of Maji Maji by researching, documenting and popularizing her-story. To achieve this objective the National Museum of Tanzania prepares and mounts a special exhibition and documentaries that aimed to reveal her story that place Nduna Mkomanile at the center of interpretation. The exhibition draws on oral histories, collections, and archival fragments to demonstrate how women shaped the course of the anti-colonial struggles and how their legacy continues to live in present communities.

The information used in both the exhibition and documentaries is grounded in the findings collected during fieldwork in Kitanda Old Igumbiro, Namabengo, and Songea, where

community testimonies and local memory provided new insights into the leadership of Nduna Mkomanile. These findings reveal that Mkomanile performed multiple strategic roles during an national narrative the Maji Maji War. She coordinated the distribution of the sacred maji medicines brought by messengers from Matumbi, directed their allocation to Ngoni fighting camps, planned war zones and supply routes and organized women to prepare and transport food to forest hideouts. Testimonies further explain how she safeguarded intelligence networks by hiding fighters and guiding movements away from German patrols. Such activities led colonial authorities to regard her as a major threat, culminating in her execution in February 1907. This evidence repositions Mkomanile as a strategist and administrator rather than a mere ritual figure.

The exhibition therefore recognizes women as principal organizers of resistance against German colonial rule. Its purpose is to restore a silenced voice, to integrate research evidence with community memory, and to demonstrate that national history becomes complete only when women are acknowledged as key agents of transformation. The exhibition is organized into a main theme with three interlinked sub-themes that follow the chronology of before, during, and after the war.

The exhibition displays physical objects, videos of testimonies, photos, archives and digital media to re-interpret the Maji Maji War from the standpoint of a woman leader. It invites visitors to reconsider the story of Nduna Mkomanile who helped to set the stage for the struggle against social injustice and for a more inclusive and truthful Tanzanian national narrative.

